



NEWS Local News

Young pianist striking a chord

12:00 AM CDT on Thursday, September 20, 2007

In 2003, *Time* magazine called pianist **Abigail Sin** a "bona fide prodigy." And with good reason.

The 15-year-old started attending music appreciation classes at age 4. By age 9, she performed her first debut solo recital. Soon after, she began performing throughout Europe and Asia.

She has won numerous awards and prizes, including the Virginia Waring Piano Competition in the United States, the Ibiza International Piano Competition in Spain, the ASEAN Chopin Piano Competition in Malaysia, the International Festival of Young Musicians in Lithuania and the HSBC Youth Excellence Award for Musical Excellence in Singapore.

Her most recent accomplishment was a win in her division at the Viardo International Piano Competition in Richardson last week.

In 2006, she was asked to perform before Britain's **Queen Elizabeth** when the monarch visited Singapore. Later that evening, after playing for the queen, the teenager boarded a plane for Ukraine, where she competed and won second place in the Vladimir Krainev International Competition for Young Pianists.

Also last year, at age 14, she completed her first seven-concert European tour – performing throughout Germany, Lithuania, Romania and Ukraine. This tour marked the first time she traveled solo on an extended trip – leaving her parents behind.

Last year, she also became the youngest student to enroll at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music of the National University of Singapore, where she is working on a bachelor's degree in music. Last month, she and five fellow students from Singapore arrived in Baltimore to study at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University as part of a one-semester student exchange program.

Accompanying the students from Asia is Dr. **Thomas Hect**, head of piano studies at the Singapore conservatory.

Abigail is the Asian kid who makes the rest of us look bad. Looking over her résumé, one can't help but be impressed. And her piano career notwithstanding, she is also becoming a role model for other aspiring young Asians seeking a career in the arts.

But Abigail shies away from this conversation; in fact, she bristles when asked about the *Time* magazine reference to her being a "bona fide prodigy."

"I'm not sure what that means exactly," she said.

"I mean, exactly when do you stop being a child prodigy?" she asked. "Calling someone a prodigy sounds like there may be a time limit imposed. Can you still be a prodigy at age 18?"

Instead, Abigail said, she prefers to be known simply as a young artist.

Abigail is the only musician in her family.

"I think I just heard some classical music and it stuck," she said.

Describing her transition from playing for fun to playing professionally, she said: "It has been a gradual process, a fascinating journey of discovery," explaining that she hopes to one day be a recording artist.

Dr. Hect flew to Dallas just in time to hear his prize pupil play.

"She is quite phenomenal," Dr. Hect said Sunday evening. "It's difficult to believe that she has accomplished so much at such a young age – and enrolled in college as well."

Abigail was one of 20 competitors in the junior division of the International Viardo Piano Competition held at the Eisemann Center in Richardson last week. She placed first in her division with her repertoire of Liszt, Debussy, Haydn, Ravel and Griffes and took home a \$1,000 cash prize.

Laura Spector of Plano placed second, and **Yue Bing Lin** of Fort Worth placed third in the junior division.

Dmitri Levkovich won first place in the senior category, taking home a \$4,000 cash prize. **Jae-Hyuck Cho** and **DiZhou Zhao** were both named third-place winners.

Vladimir Viardo, for whom the competition is named, is a world-renowned Russian pianist who was the top prize winner in the 1973 Van Cliburn Competition. He has won a number of international awards and is a professor and artist-in-residence at the University of North Texas.

He is also founder of the Viardo Foundation, which provides financial assistance to promising students.

The first Viardo competition was held in California in 2005; the second was in New York state in 2006. This marks the first time the competition has been in Texas.

- The Japan-America Society of Dallas/Fort Worth will hold its eighth annual Otsukimi or Moon Viewing Celebration at 6:30 p.m. Sept. 27 at the Dallas Arboretum, 8525 Garland Road in Dallas. General admission tickets are \$16 for adults and \$7 for children 3 to 12 years. Bento, or Japanese box suppers, are available for \$15. Orders for the box suppers must be received by Friday. For more information, visit www.jasdfw.org or call 214-342-2022.

No other food or beverages will be sold at the arboretum, but visitors are invited to bring their own picnic suppers and lawn chairs for the outdoor event.

The Otsukimi celebration will include calligraphy and *ikebana* demonstrations, as well as music and haiku presentations.

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